



Minutes of the Regular Meeting
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, November 5, 2003
Paiute Neighborhood Center Building 9
6535 E. Osborn Rd.

Present: Chairperson Shelley Anderson, Vice-chair Leigh Hersey, Commissioners David Fortney, Bill Heckman, Donn Loper, Nona Oliver, and Stephen Owens

Staff Present: Debra Baird, Amy Boenning, Kathy Breen, Terry Erickson, Bill Exham, Steve Lehmann, Bill Murphy, Dick Olsen, Jody Rover, Judy Weiss, and Rose Williams

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Anderson called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chairperson Anderson asked that a moment of silence be observed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Commissioner Heckman moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of September 17, 2003 as submitted. Commissioner Fortney seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW COMMISSIONER - DONN LOPER

Chairperson Anderson introduced Donn Loper who was appointed by the City Council on October 14, 2003 to serve on the Commission for a 3-year term.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT OF CURRENT EVENTS (A.R.S. § 38-431.02(K))

Debra Baird, Parks, Recreation & Facilities Director, updated the Commission on the status of events and activities of the Parks, Recreation, & Facilities Division.

LITTLE LEAGUE PROPOSAL REGARDING 03-04 MAINTENANCE FEES

Judy Weiss gave an overview presentation on the Youth Sports Task Force Report. Ms. Weiss introduced Mr. John Murphy, President of Arcadia Little League. Mr. Murphy noted he was at this evening's meeting on behalf of the Little League and District 6 Little League. Mr. Murphy made a proposal to the Parks and Recreation Commission regarding a city match of lump sum donations in lieu of the \$3 per hour fee approved by the City Council in June 2003.

Commissioner Fortney noted that Mr. Murphy referred to \$100,000 per year in maintenance and asked if that was coming from the budgets of the districts. Mr. Murphy said the funds came from the individual leagues' budgets. Commissioner Fortney asked what percentage was Arcadia. Mr. Murphy said about

25 percent. Commissioner Fortney noted the reason for this program is to lower the costs to the leagues by doing the startup and some interim maintenance. One of the problems was cost to leagues that used school properties. They had to pay tremendous fees to play each year. Commissioner Fortney asked Mr. Murphy if he didn't feel that this fee program will lower the fees to the leagues on maintenance. Mr. Murphy said it may, but the concern is that the leagues will put less than they are currently contributing at other fields. This could be a patch that opens a hole in another place. Mr. Murphy said another concern is that leagues would pay \$40,000 in usage and as a result maybe that is all they would pay therefore reducing maintenance services.

Commissioner Oliver noted the Mayor called her and asked her opinion. Commissioner Oliver said she feels that everybody should pay his or her fair share. Mr. Murphy said if the Little League is spending \$100,000 per year and they are 25% of the users and there was \$300,000 coming from other users there wouldn't be a need for this program. He noted it is a great program, but there weren't many presidents on the task force. He feels that there may be a perception that members are representing organizations when they really are not. Many leagues didn't know about it until it was passed. The Little League is not asking the City to lower the fee but to accept a documented financial contribution in lieu of that fee and ask the City to match it. Commissioner Oliver asked if the group was asking the City to pick up what they don't pay. Mr. Murphy said no, it would be money coming in from the Little Leagues collectively of \$20,000 and a match from the City. If the City says no, the Little Leagues may still do it but on a grant basis. Commissioner Oliver stated if this is done for the Little Leagues then the soccer groups and the other organizations will want to do the same. Mr. Murphy said if their contribution is the same kind of contribution that the Little League does then that may be the case. If the Little League can be distinguished then they are asking for special treatment. The distinction is more as a partner and not a user. Commissioner Oliver entered into the record an e-mail she sent to the City Council regarding this issue.

Commissioner Heckman asked if the \$100,000 in contribution in dollars as he thought it was inclusive of volunteer time. Mr. Murphy said the spreadsheet shows that the \$100,000 is a fair assessment of dollars spent by leagues. Commissioner Heckman reconfirmed that the money is out of pocket and not capital expenses and is for field maintenance only. Commissioner Heckman said that figure does not include volunteer time. Mr. Murphy said that was correct. Commissioner Heckman said when the Commission entertained the proposal he was excited because the community came forward to expand the ability to service more kids by having more fields in acceptable shape. He noted he found this to be creative financing. The program is to have maintenance and continue with the volunteer contributions. Commissioner Heckman said the intent of the new program is to provide extra dollars for the kids. Little League is probably paying more than fair share. Mr. Murphy said the incremental money is not absent from proposal. The Little League is hoping the City Council will approve matching funds and they will go to this program. Ms. Baird noted if the matching funds are approved they could come from the Parks, Recreation and Facilities budget and these funds are not currently allocated for in this fiscal year's budget. Mr. Murphy noted it is his understanding that the funds would not come from the Parks and Recreation budget but from a special reserve fund. Commissioner Heckman noted that the funds would have to come from somewhere. The City is having trouble balancing the budget now. Assuming they could find money that doesn't currently exist what will happen in subsequent years. Mr. Murphy said the suggestion is to begin a new dialogue of how little leagues can in a collective voice work with staff to better utilize the Partnership Funding program. There needs to be a better dialogue of needs and concerns on how we can continue to grow this partnership and that could start right away. Commissioner Heckman said, in the capital improvement program, the vast majority of the funds have supported the Little Leagues. This is also a tremendous amount of additional investment that has not been shared with other organizations. There is more to this than this proposal is addressing. That is why this is a pilot project.

Chairperson Anderson asked Ms. Baird to restate the budget information. Ms. Baird clarified the Parks and Recreation budget is a part of the City of Scottsdale budget. When programs are added the \$20,000 needed could come from the Park and Recreation budget meaning a reduction in other programming. Mr. Murphy stated the intent was not to have the money to create a shortfall. The proposal was to find dollars that would not impact the operating budget. Ms. Baird noted that the Division could be asked to reduce the operational budget by the amount of the money.

Commissioner Fortney noted at a previous Commission meeting a presentation was made that showed how far behind on fields the City was. Commissioner Heckman brought up the fact that consideration was not given to the City's closeness to other cities and a crossover of users. Would the Little League support a non-resident fee to cover dollars. Mr. Murphy said the Little League is unique in that its population is drawn on geographic boundaries and those are the public school boundaries. There could be schools that have children that are not Scottsdale residents and they are using Scottsdale facilities. Commissioner Fortney said it is not a question of the program but how it gets paid for.

Public Testimony

Scott Graham noted his organization plays on the fields at Cochise. We are at the midpoint in this new maintenance project and the grass is still green after the maintenance and the field is better than in the past. He represents the 2,200 kids that play primarily at Cochise and while they are not thrilled with the fee they support it and look forward to the review after the year is up. He has spoken with the parents and they understand that you have to pay something. He hopes this program is funded appropriately after the year is up and we continue to invest money, time, and energy.

James Teeter noted he was a member of the Task Force and thought it was well organized. Anyone that wanted to join could. Little Leagues were represented and the main objective was to have a solution for the fields for all sports. The group agreed upon the fee program. Of course everyone would prefer the City fund it but the money was needed. It is a minimal impact on the league but benefits other leagues too. His group has contributed a substantial amount of money for the year also. He and his group support the number and don't have a challenge with the existing program. If you treat one group different others will take exception. He recommends that the task force be reformed with proper representation.

Chairperson Anderson closed the public testimony. Chairperson Anderson asked each Commissioner to give their comments on this issue.

Commissioner Owens noted that he appreciates all the sentiments. He did review and approve the Task Force report including the fee program. He didn't understand the implications of the fees on the various teams. He is not sure the program will go beyond one year. He would prefer not to focus on future years, as this is a real problem. There is the expectation that the Little League would provide the funding and field maintenance that they have been providing but there is no requirement that they do that. There is a real concern that some may say we won't fund raise. This is a citizen's idea based on a problem that has arisen. This proposal is a good faith effort to find a creative solution to a real problem. We can say that we want to insure that none of the money comes from the Parks and Recreation budget. We need to think this through as the Little Leagues contribute a lot of money and we don't know exactly how much the other groups contribute. We want to carry our share but not more and don't want to make the situation worse. He is in favor of supporting this proposal with the stipulation the matching funds are not taken from the Parks budget.

Commissioner Loper noted all other youth sports are being assessed the fee beginning in July 2003. Other cities are charging \$5 per hour and where lighting is used \$17 per hour. We cannot disregard a few facts such as there is no money available in the School District to support the maintenance or in the City's Parks and Recreation budget; All groups are being assessed the fee; and we can't disregard the Task Force's recommendations or the support by the council and Parks and Recreation. He feels the fee is not exorbitant and is reasonable. He would like to see the current fee program continue for a year and then be reassessed.

Commissioner Heckman said we are always talking about shortage of fields, pools, and amenities. It is simple the City grew too fast. We had great plans for parks but we weren't able to follow through as we grew north. We have a tough economy and money is being cut all over. The school fields were horrible but it was a school field, not a community facility. The schools said they didn't have any money to maintain them so the Task Force was formed. He is surprised that Little League was not more involved. The Task Force came back with a sound program as a pilot. The City said we want to do something and kicked in time and resources. No one took into account there would be surprise or anger felt in the community.

We needed to raise the incremental money. The user fee would create the funding that would implement the program. He agrees that Little League pays a bunch in maintenance but they also get a bunch. We should have a way to measure this. The fear is that the concern comes true that the Little Leagues say "we have already given" and that will kill the program. It was not until after the Task Force decision was made that we heard any negative feed back. Then we hear a proposal with a threat that Little League will reduce their input. He agrees with the one-year trial pilot. He feels it is wrong that we have beautiful parks and lousy school fields. This is a program developed by well meaning people with well meaning concepts. The usage fee is spread so as to be fair to everyone.

Vice-Chair Hersey thanked the Little League for all they have done in the past to maintain the fields. This program is seen to keep the children safe. The concern with the proposal is that some of the fields are in poor shape we would miss visits as a result of the proposal. All fields need to be well maintained. The draft includes 36 groups, 13 Little League Baseball, 4 Youth Baseball and 7 Softball. The Little Leagues may have put lights in but they also use them. She is in favor of keeping the current program for a year and re-evaluating at that time.

Commissioner Fortney noted that his enthusiasm for baseball is high. There has always been concern about the fields. He served on the Task Force. If the City Council said right now "we would pay the whole fee" he would be the happiest person in Scottsdale. Staff said, "How do we pay for this as there is no money." The Task Force came up with the fee program. No one wanted to have a fee but the program of improving the fields for the kids was important. He would love to see everyone not have to pay but that is not the reality. If we approve this Little League proposal, at the next meeting the Commission will hear from the Boys and Girls Clubs as they are the largest users and spend a lot of money on youth sports. Do we make exceptions for them. Do we look at the leagues by longevity since they are separate leagues. We have to go through this program for this year. It is too important to lose. All the groups must get together. It must be worked out how to pay the fees. He supports the Task Force recommendation and feels it is a good start.

Chairperson Anderson thanked the Little League for their passion about this proposal. She finds no compelling reason to change what has been decided in the past. This is a contract for a year then it will be reevaluated. The Little League spoke to reducing the contribution but it seems you are just turning over the maintenance fees to another party to do the maintenance that you have been doing. It is control. In the presentation it was an excellent example the fees are obviously working. She agrees with many members but believes that it is in the best interest of all sports to stick with the current program through the year and then reevaluate.

Commissioner Heckman feel it is interesting to propose matching capital funds program be used for maintenance. That is meant for future years. In the presentation by Staff it showed \$4,200 has been raised and \$1,100 has been spent. Is this projected to come together. Ms. Weiss said Staff just doesn't know yet. Soccer has just started and their funds have not been received. We still have two more maintenance visits to complete. Commissioner Heckman said this was the School's problem and we felt so strongly about it we moved it to a City concern thanks to a citizen. Rightfully the battle should be fought with the schools. We were not willing to sit by so we did something.

Commissioner Heckman moved to reaffirm the previously approved action taken by the Parks and Recreation Commission at the May 21, 2003 Commission meeting to implement the Youth Sports School Maintenance fee. Commissioner Fortney seconded. The motion carried with a 6-1 vote (Commissioner Owens dissenting).

2003 NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD

Judy Weiss, Manager, gave an overview of the 2003 National Gold Medal Award, which was awarded to the City of Scottsdale at the recent National Parks and Recreation Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

UPDATE ON AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Terry Erickson, Senior Recreation Coordinator, updated the Commission on the Afterschool programming including, the Lights on After School program. Afterschool programs are meant to fill gaps where other services leave off. The City programs are currently at no-charge to the participants. Ms. Erickson provided a slide show of activities and events that are a part of the program.

Commissioner Loper commented that the City provides many service free of charge to the participants.

Commissioner Heckman asked if we allow non-residents in the Afterschool programs. Ms. Erickson said residents are always given preference in the programs. At Yavapai Elementary School they serve a population of non-residents so those participants are permitted to attend that program.

UPDATE FROM HANDLEBAR HELPERS AND THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB

Terry Erickson, Senior Recreation Coordinator, updated the Commission on the Handlebar Helpers Program and the International Club. Both programs operate out of Paiute Neighborhood Center. Ms. Erickson gave a slide show picturing the activities of the International Club and the Handlebar Helpers Program. The Commission is invited to tour the Handlebar Helper facility at any time.

Chairperson Anderson asked how to donate bikes to the program. Ms. Erickson said there is limited storage available so right now there is no need. If additional storage is found then citizens can contact Parks, Recreation and Facilities to donate bikes.

UPDATE FROM PAUI TE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Kathy Breen updated the Commission on the activities and events at Paiute Neighborhood Center including the recent opening of Building 9. Paiute serves both Parks and Recreation and Human Services needs of the community. Ms. Breen gave a slide presentation of the newest facilities at the center including the Senior Center and Lecture Room.

OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC (A.R.S. § 38-431.02)

Chairperson Anderson asked for any items from the floor or from the Commission. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Heckman moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Fortney seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

With no further action to come before the Commission, Chairperson Anderson adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Johnson, Recording Secretary.

Meets established criteria.



Debra Baird, Director
Parks, Recreation & Facilities